ROBERT KIRKMAN
CONOR HUGHES
PATRICIO DELPECHE
VOID RIVALS
image
#20

ROBERT KIRKMAN
/WRITER/

CONOR HUGHES
/ARTIST/

PATRICIO DELPECHE
/COLORIST/

RUS WOOTON
/LETTERER/

LORENZO DE FELICI

CONOR HUGHES

MARTÍN MORAZZO & PATRICIO DELPECHE

MARK TORRES

PATRICIA MARTÍN

JASON HOWARD & ANNALISA LEONI

JASON HOWARD
/COVERS/

BEN ABERNATHY
/EDITOR/

ANDRES JUAREZ
/LOGO & PUBLICATION DESIGN/

ASHBY FLORENCE
/PRODUCTION/

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/VOID RIVALS CREATED BY/
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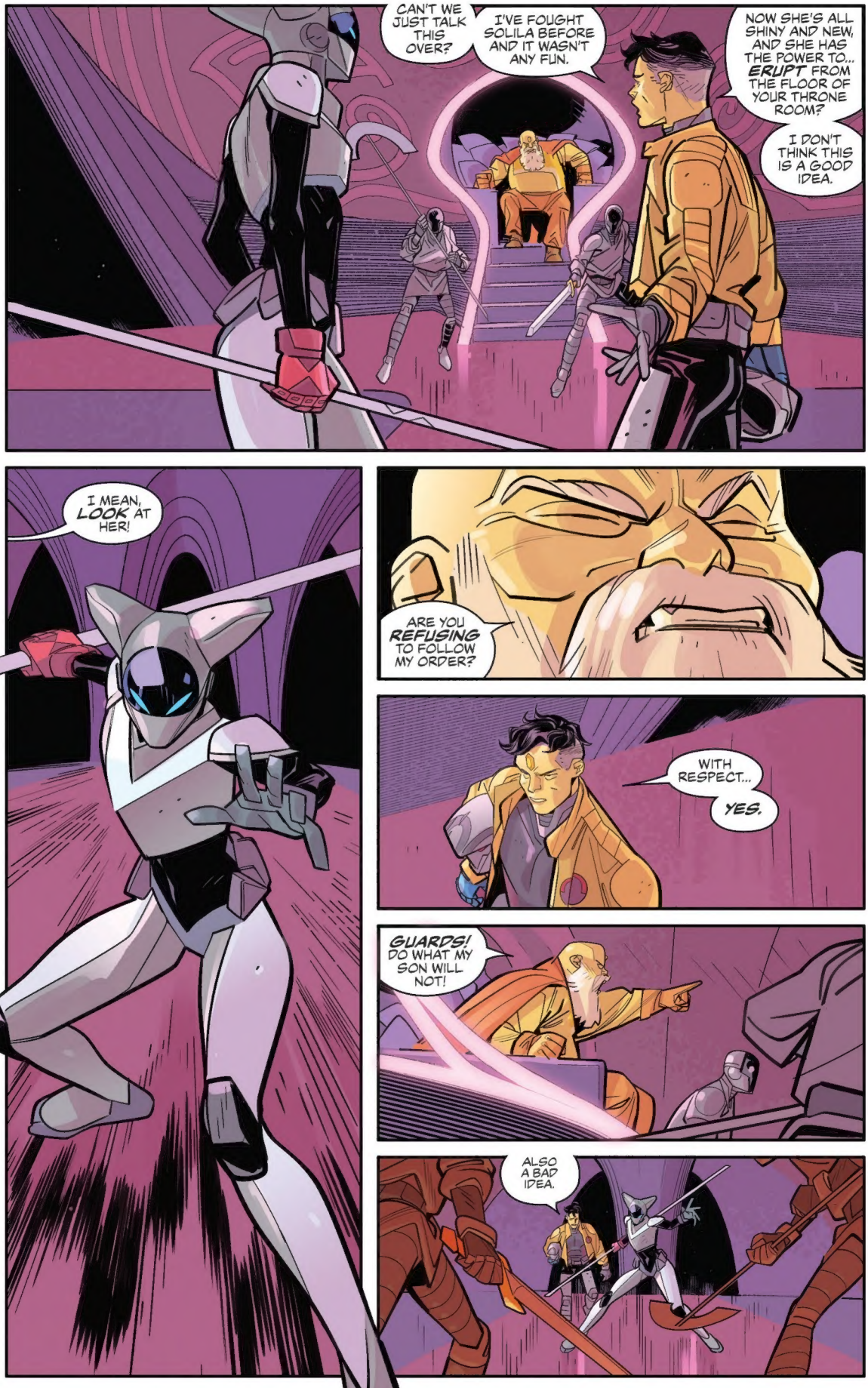
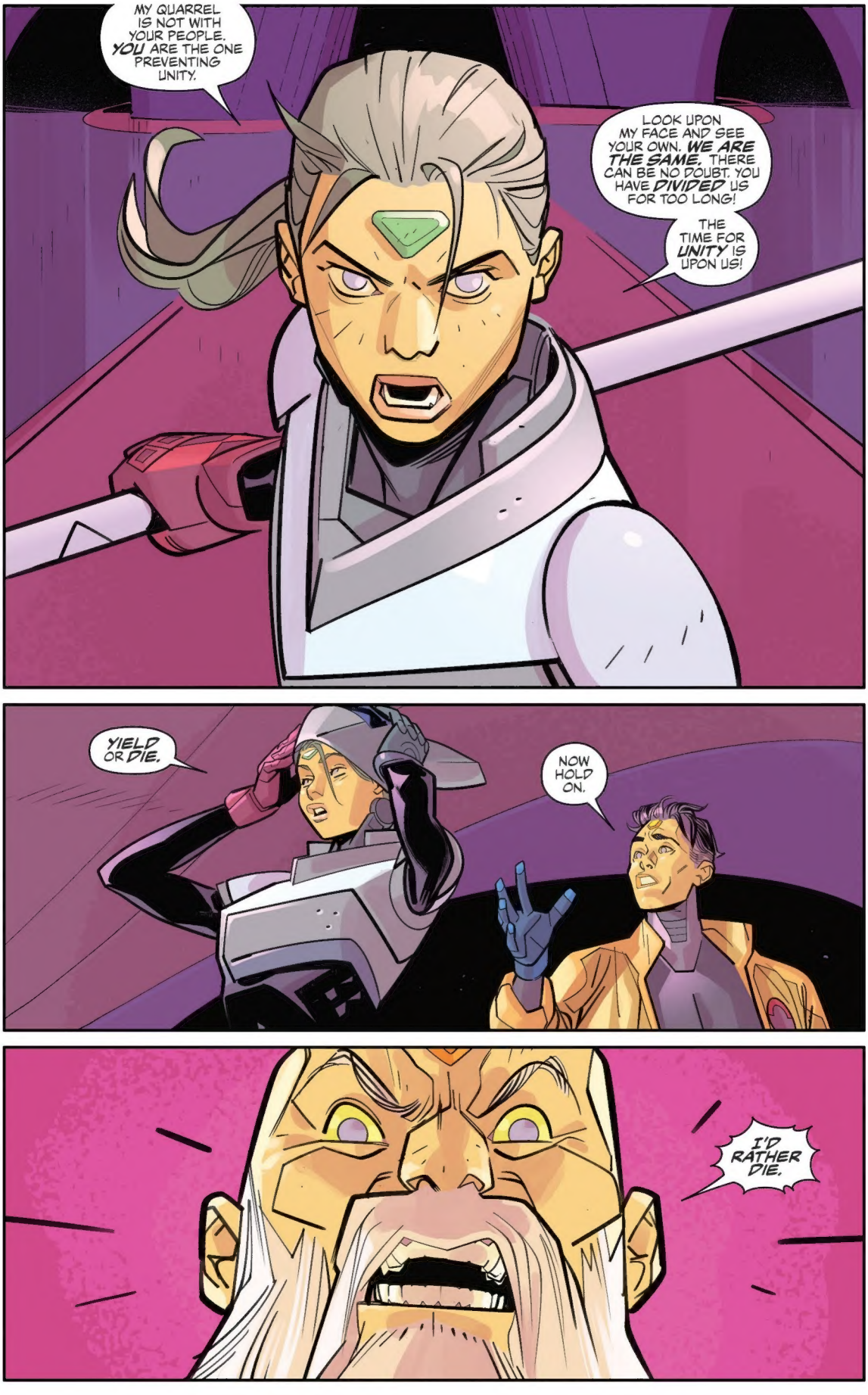
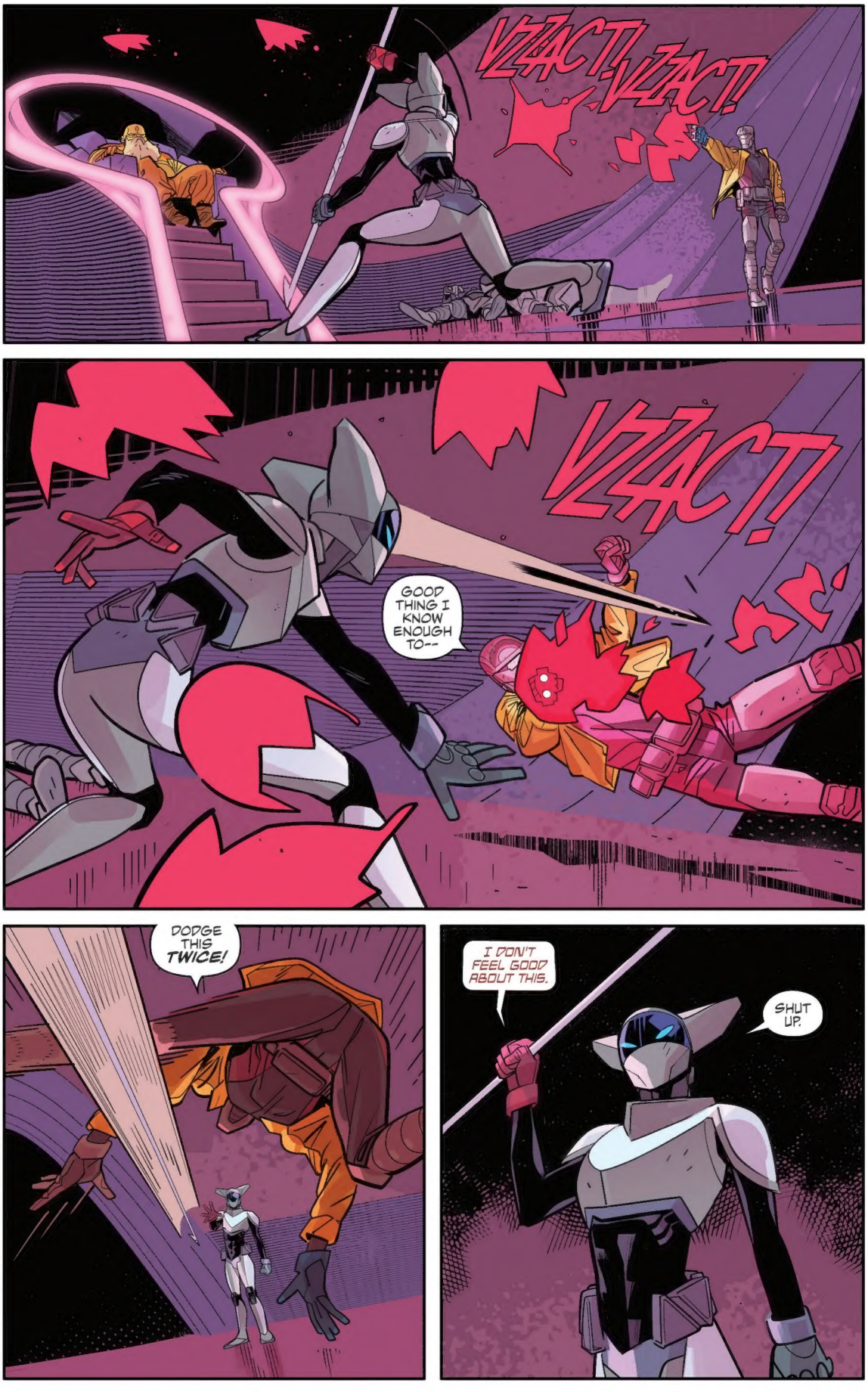

CAN'T WE JUST TALK THIS OVER?
I'VE FOUGHT SOLILA BEFORE AND IT WASN'T ANY FUN.
NOW SHE'S ALL SHINY AND NEW, AND SHE HAS THE POWER TO... ERUPT FROM THE FLOOR OF YOUR THRONE ROOM?
I DON'T THINK THIS IS A GOOD IDEA.
I MEAN, LOOK AT HER!
ARE YOU REFUSING TO FOLLOW MY ORDER?
WITH RESPECT...
YES.
GUARDS! DO WHAT MY SON WILL NOT!
ALSO A BAD IDEA.

I HAVE NO WISH TO HARM YOU.
I WILL DO MY BEST TO LEAVE YOU ALIVE.
WRAKK!
WRAMM!

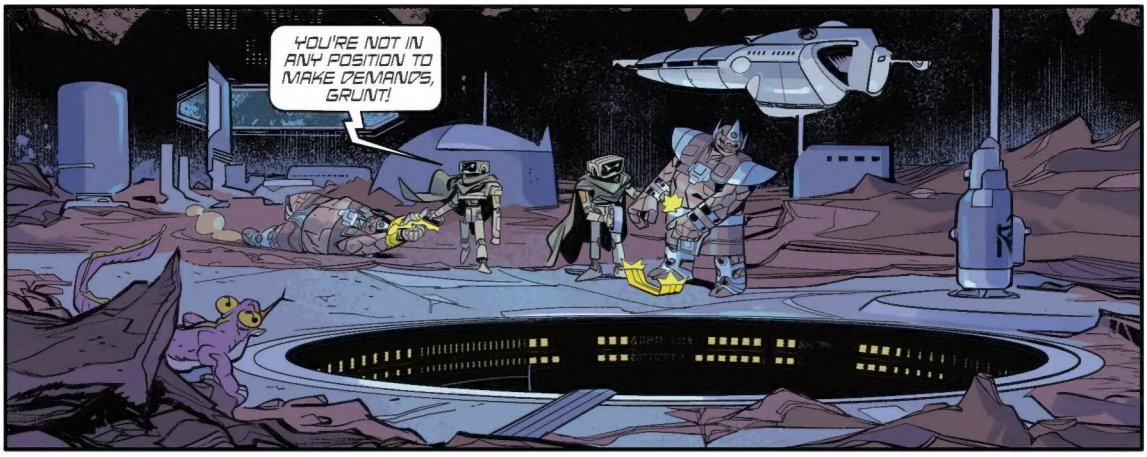
YOU'RE MAKING THIS TOO EASY.
SHAKK!
IZZACK!
WHUDD!
THEY WILL LIVE.

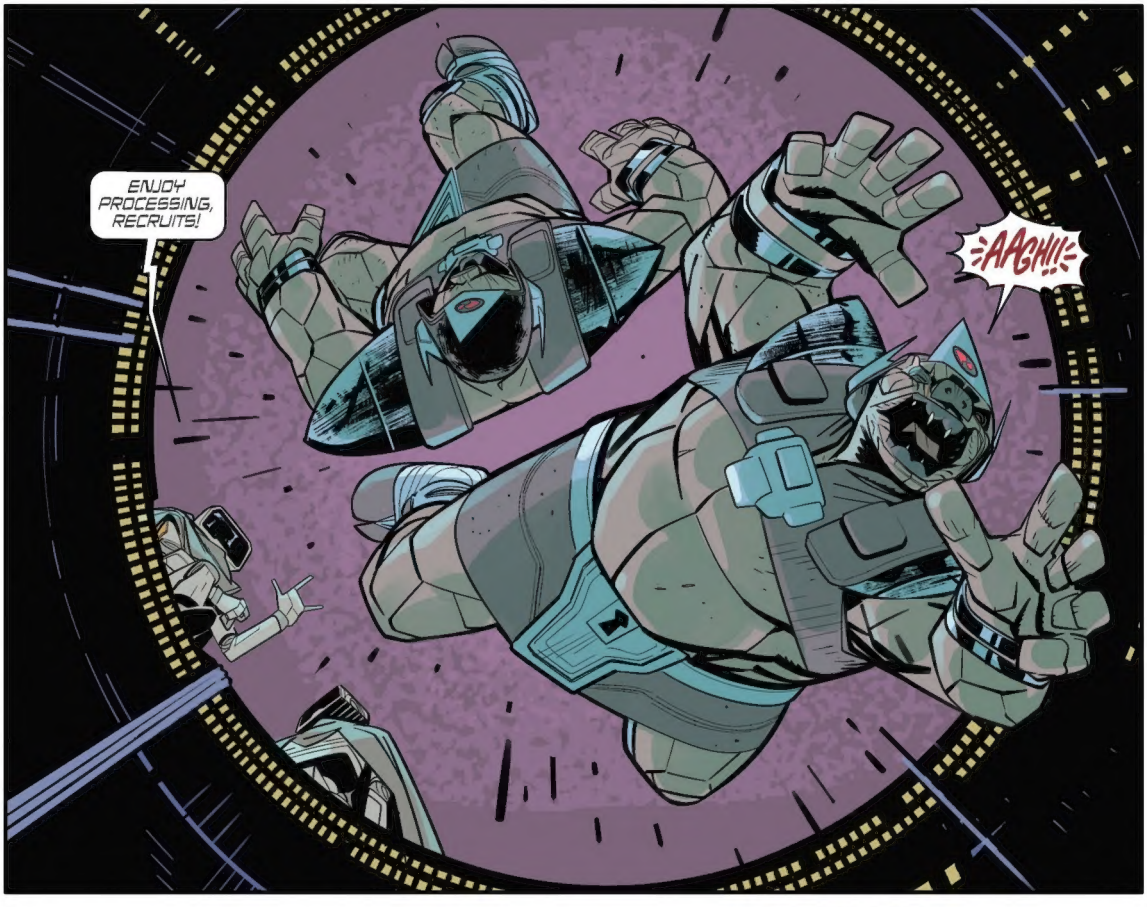

MY QUARREL IS NOT WITH YOUR PEOPLE. YOU ARE THE ONE PREVENTING UNITY.
LOOK UPON MY FACE AND SEE YOUR OWN. WE ARE THE SAME. THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT. YOU HAVE DIVIDED US FOR TOO LONG!
THE TIME FOR UNITY IS UPON US!
YIELD OR DIE.
NOW HOLD ON.
I'D RATHER DIE.

SO BE IT.
WAIT! STOP!
VAZZKIT
I SAID STOP!
YOU WANT TO TALK THIS OVER? OKAY. WE SHOULDN'T HAVE ATTACKED YOU. I GET THAT.
I'M NOT ABOUT TO LET YOU KILL OUR LEADER.
I CONSIDER YOU A FRIEND, DARAK. BUT I'M SORRY... THE STAKES ARE TOO HIGH.
I'M AFRAID I'M GOING TO HAVE TO BREAK MY PROMISE TO YOU. AGAIN.
OH, DANG.


VZAC!! VZAC!!
VZAC!!
GOOD THING I KNOW ENOUGH TO--
DODGE THIS TWICE!
I DON'T FEEL GOOD ABOUT THIS.
SHUT UP.

SKUXXOID ASTEROID BASE.
SEND THEM TO PROCESSING!
WHAT?! NO!
LET GO OF ME!
YOUR RESISTANCE IS POINTLESS.
WHERE ARE YOU TAKING US?!
I DEMAND TO TALK TO SKUXXOID ALPHA!

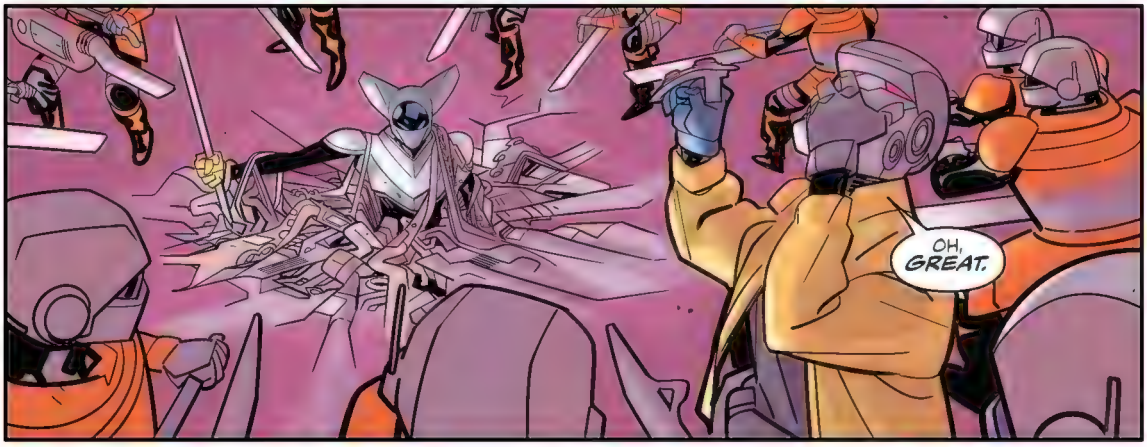

YOU'RE NOT IN ANY POSITION TO MAKE DEMANDS, GRUNT!

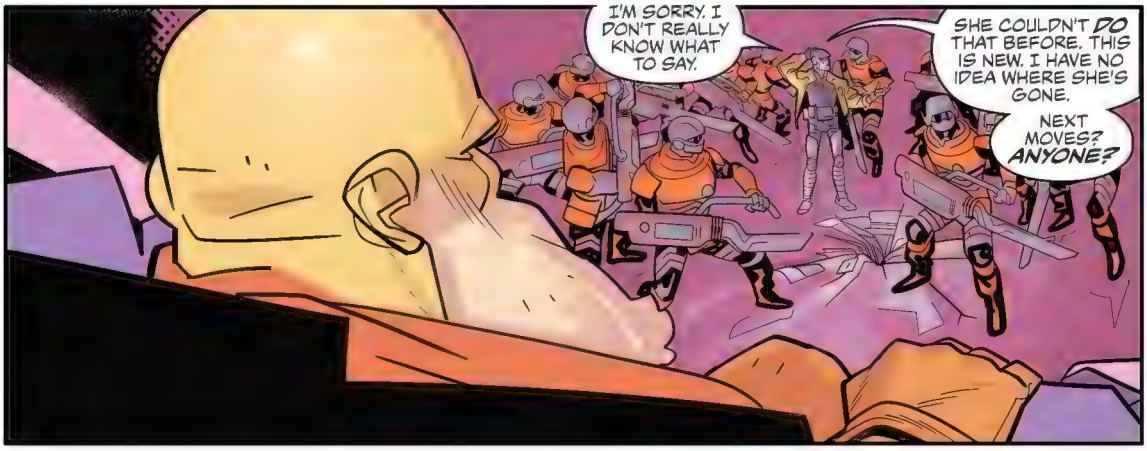

ENJOY PROCESSING, RECRUITS!
AAGH!!

HELP!

HANDROID, ANY IDEAS?
I CAN SEE NO ADVANTAGE.
WHAT? MY ARM!
YOU'RE USELESS!
SORRY, I CAN'T LET YOU HURT HIM!
THUNK!
YOU'VE SERVED YOUR PURPOSE.
HEY!
YOU'RE A BETTER FIGHTER THAN ME, YEAH. BUT I'M NO SLOUCH.
I'M PROBABLY NOT GOING TO WIN THIS-- BUT THERE'S A CHANCE.
THERE IS NO--
CHOM!

THIS GOING HOW YOU THOUGHT IT WOULD? DO YOU FEEL US UNIFYING?
BECAUSE IT SEEMS TO ME LIKE YOU'RE ACCOMPLISHING THE EXACT OPPOSITE.


OH, GREAT.

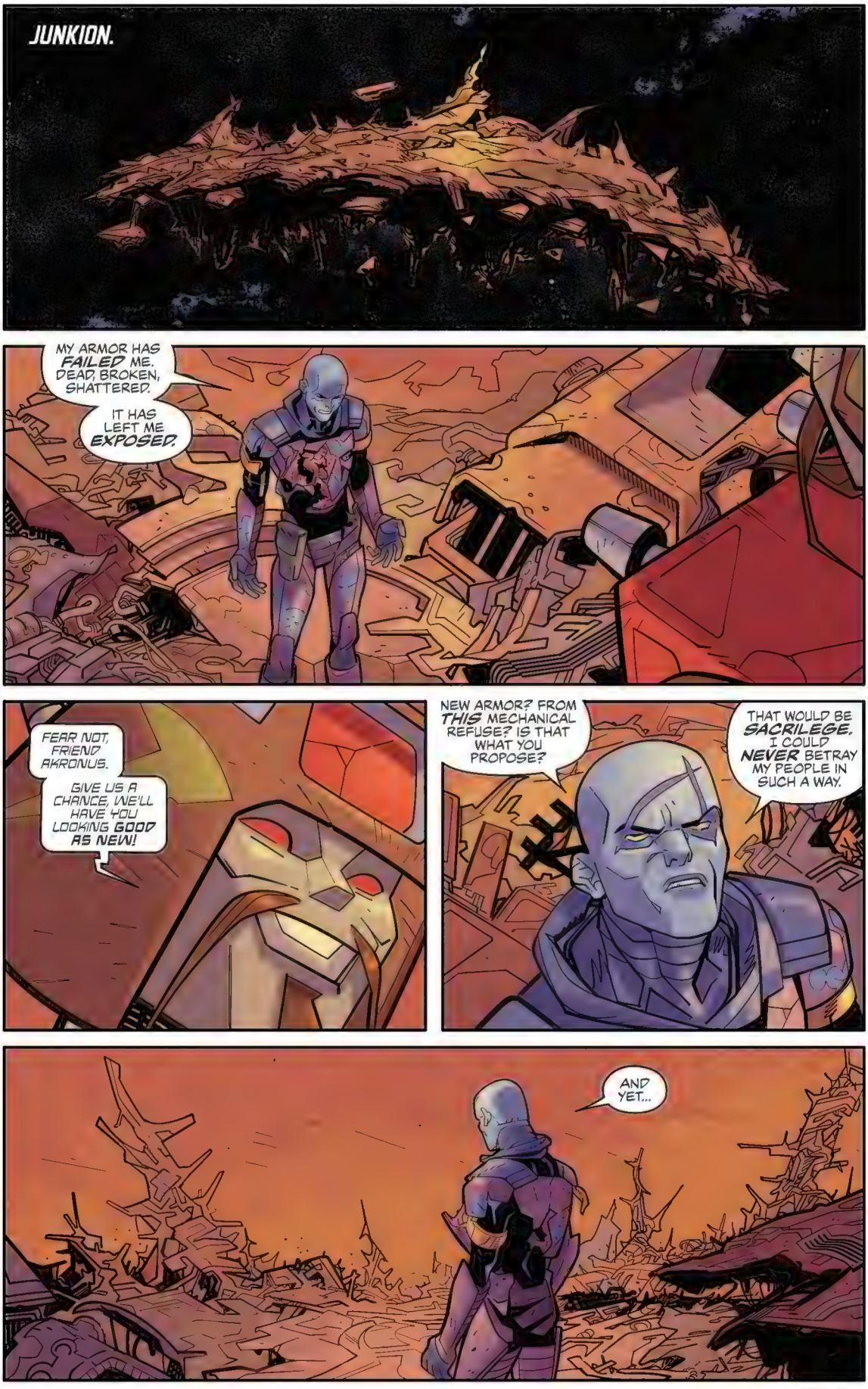

I'M SORRY. I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT TO SAY.
SHE COULDN'T DO THAT BEFORE. THIS IS NEW. I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE SHE'S GONE.
NEXT MOVES? ANYONE?

WRAKK!
WHUDD!
KRCM!
WRAK!
WROK!
WRUK!
FOR YOUR OWN GOOD.
STAY DOWN.
YOU WERE ON MY SIDE-- AS COMMITTED TO UNITY AS I WAS.
WHAT CHANGED, DARAK?

I TALKED TO HIM!
MAYBE YOU COULD TRY IT?
I HAVE NO DESIRE TO SPEAK TO YOU ON THESE MATTERS.
I'VE GIVEN YOU NO CHOICE.

HM. CURIOUS SCAR. I DIDN'T KNOW SUCH A THING WAS POSSIBLE.
AH!
CEASE SQUIRMING!
HOW HAS THIS NOT HEALED?
ACID TALONS. NASTY CHARACTER. YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN HER.
THIS IS CONCERNING.
ALPHA WILL NOT LIKE THIS.
OKAY. WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? I MEAN, I DON'T LIKE IT EITHER!
CAN YOU FIX IT?
OH, THIS ONE IS FAR YOUNGER THAN THE OTHER.
I'D WAGER HE WAS DIVIDED FROM THAT ONE. HE'S BRAND NEW.
INTERESTING.

VERY INTERESTING! SEND HIM TO PRIORITY PROCESSING IMMEDIATELY.
WHAT?!
WHAT IS PRIORITY PROCESSING?!
WAIT! NO!
DON'T SEPARATE US, PLEASE!
BRING HIM BACK!
WHAT ARE YOU--
STOP RESISTING!
:AACKT-!!:
VZAAA


JUNKION.
MY ARMOR HAS FAILED ME. DEAD, BROKEN, SHATTERED.
IT HAS LEFT ME EXPOSED.
FEAR NOT, FRIEND AKRONUS.
GIVE US A CHANCE, WE'LL HAVE YOU LOOKING GOOD AS NEW!
NEW ARMOR? FROM THIS MECHANICAL REFUSE? IS THAT WHAT YOU PROPOSE?
THAT WOULD BE SACRILEGE. I COULD NEVER BETRAY MY PEOPLE IN SUCH A WAY.
AND YET...

AGORRIA.
SACRED TEXTS... OKAY. YOU HAVE THIS INFORMATION, PASSED DOWN FOR GENERATIONS... SECOND HAND.
I HAVE CONVERSED DIRECTLY WITH ZERTA. THE CREATOR OF THE SACRED RING. SHE HAS EXPLAINED ITS PURPOSE.
YOU MET ZERTA? LIKE, IN PERSON? SHE'S ACTUALLY REAL?
YES. YOU HAVE HEARD HER VOICE. YOU ALREADY KNOW THIS TO BE TRUE.
WE ARE ALL HER CHILDREN.
IN A WAY, WE ARE ALL ZERTONIAN.
BLASPHEMY!
IT IS A NEW DAWN, MINISTER DULIN. FOR ALL OF US.
YOUR OLD RULES AND SUPERSTITIONS SERVE NO PURPOSE ANY LONGER.
WHAT OF GOLIANT?!
IS ITS RELEASE NOT WORTH PREVENTING?!

THE COMING OF GOLIANT IS ESSENTIAL TO OUR PLANS. IT IS REQUIRED IF WE ARE TO MOVE FORWARD AS A PEOPLE. IT IS OUR NEXT STEP.
WE MUST RELEASE GOLIANT WHILE IT IS WEAKENED ENOUGH TO DESTROY.
THIS IS ZERTA'S PLAN. IT ALWAYS HAS BEEN.
DOES GOLIANT'S RELEASE NOT BRING ABOUT OUR END? HOW DOES IT ESCAPE THE BLACK HOLE WITHOUT THE SACRED RING'S DESTRUCTION?
HAVING A HARD TIME WITH THAT ONE MYSELF.
I TRUST ZERTA'S PLAN. I BELIEVE IN UNITY. I BELIEVE IN THE AWAKENING OF GOLIANT... SO THAT IT MAY FINALLY BE DESTROYED, ENDING ITS THREAT TO ALL WE HOLD DEAR.
YEAH, BUT WHAT IF... ZERTA'S PLAN DOESN'T INCLUDE OUR SURVIVAL? ZERTA'S STORY AND THE SACRED TEXTS... THEY BASICALLY SAY THE SAME THING...
BUT ONE OF THEM IS CONCERNED WITH OUR SURVIVAL... AND IT SEEMS LIKE THE OTHER ONE... ISN'T.

I AM, AT LONG LAST, YOURS, ZERTA. WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE ME DO?
YOU ARE TO FIND SOLILA. SHE HAS BEEN CHARGED WITH THE GREAT PURPOSE OF UNIFYING ALL PEOPLE OF THE SACRED RING.
YOU ARE TO ASSIST HER IN THIS MISSION.
I SENSE THAT SHE MAY REQUIRE YOUR **STRENGTH** TO STAY THE COURSE.
SHE **CANNOT** FAIL IN HER TASK. NO MATTER THE COST. DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
I DO.

YOUR WILL IS MY COMMAND.
I AM PLEASED TO HEAR IT.

HE CONVERSES WITH ZERTA.
HIS TRANSFORMATION IS COMPLETE.
I SPOKE WITH ZERTA HERSELF, DIRECTLY.
IT WAS... REMARKABLE.
HER DIRECTIONS TO YOU ARE YOUR OWN. I KNOW THE WILL OF ZERTA. I NEED NOT HEAR IT IN YOUR WORDS.
YES, MISTRESS VIL.

RISE, ZALILAK THE GREAT. VANQUISHER OF SCORN. BRINGER OF THE DAWN OF REVELRY. GUARDIAN TO ALL OF ZERTONIA. FOUNDER OF THE COUNCIL OF VIRE.
TRUE FIRST CHOSEN OF THE EMBRACE OF ZERTA.
THE SACRED TEXTS ARE A LIE.
I AM CORRUPTED BY THEIR DECEIT NO MORE.
I STAND BEFORE YOU A NEW MAN WITH A NEW PURPOSE.
UNITY.

TALK TO THE HANDROID

SEND YOUR QUESTIONS TO VOIDRIVALS@SKYBOUND.COM

DO NOT MESS WITH SOLILA! Holy smokes, what a bad ass! Hello dear readers and welcome back to TALK TO THE HANDROID! I'm your co-host and editor, Ben Abernathy, and I'm joined as always by the Darak to my Handroid, Robert Kirkman!

Ben, please! You're the Solila to my Darak! You're so much more than an intelligent glove companion!

Man, can you believe we're already to issue 20? Holy heck. It feels like it was only yesterday when we were talking about the potential of this wild Energon Universe. I can't believe we're already getting ready to enter YEAR THREE! Oh, boy...so much great stuff on the horizon.

And hey, everyone...how much do you love Conor Hughes? Last issue was a fun interlude with Skuxxoid but it's been a real treat seeing him draw our core characters! Look how awesome they look under his talented pen!

All right, all right...let's dive into the mail!

. . . . . .

Hello!

I've never written fan mail before, mostly because I don't really keep up with current series often, but I am absolutely keeping up with Void Rivals and Transformers. And I absolutely had to chime in and say how much I am loving Void Rivals.

I only got into Transformers back in December. A buddy of mine randomly invited me to watch the Bay-verse movies with him, and I agreed because...why not? Oh boy, I had no idea how much that would affect me at the time. I'm not super fond of those movies, but it was enough to get me interested in Transformers, something I had never known anything about before. Now, I've spent the last few months watching shows, reading comics, buying figures. It's insane how something I've never held any interest in suddenly became so important to me (and it's all my buddy's fault. Thanks, Adam).

So then, as I'm reading Transformers, I see you have this little series going too, and I will admit I'm a little late to the party. My attention was grabbed seeing Hot Rod on the cover of issue 15 (he is my absolute favorite), and I was like "well, guess I better read this, too."

So cool to hear from someone else in the "Hot Rod is my favorite" club!

I'm so glad I did. I came for the robots, and I stayed for Darak and Solila. I would already love to get my hands on some kind of merchandise. I'd add some figures to my collection or rock a Void Rivals shirt any day. The thought of a Solila cosplay has even already crossed my mind...

I'm really, really hoping we get tons of my Void Rivals content from y'all. I am absolutely devouring this series. Keep up the good work and know that we love what you're doing.

Sincerely, your resident Hot Rod fangirl,

Bell

Thank you for reading, Bell, it's a genuine pleasure to have you aboard! I'm so happy to hear that the Bay-verse is funneling people our way, heh heh! PLEASE send us a photo if you decide to do Solila cosplay--we'll print it!

Yes! I believe we've talked about it here before but there are going to be VOID RIVALS ACTION FIGURES available at Comic-Con THIS YEAR! How cool is that? Solila and Darak will come in a set with a rad Jetfire action figure. It's going to be the coolest thing ever!

. . . . . .

Dear Handroid,

Aw, I was a little disappointed that a potential conversation between two Handroids was somehow avoided at the end of Issue 18. I suppose Darak wasn't wearing his replacement Handroid for some reason? At least the Handroid Solila was given TRIED to talk. Anyway, the rest of the issue was great. All sides of the conflict were represented in this issue: The cult of Zertonians, Proximus taking the throne, the Agorrians, Darak, his father, Director Elander, Solila, the Transformer-looking Zerta (?), Vector Theta, etc. Ohhh my, I do believe Darak will have a hard time executing Solila even if he wanted to (which I'm sure he doesn't). She's like an Omega level mutant or something now. Oh, those two red/orange, green/yellow Transformer guys appear, too. What the heck are they in the story for? I'm lost. I'll probably have to do a re-read because I don't even remember where they are...

Alan Bowman
Sagamihara City, Japan

Look again! Darak is TOTALLY wearing his blue Handroid in that scene at the end of issue 18. He was prepped and ready for a mission, hence him being all geared up. It's just the blue handroid is way more polite and less intrusive, it only really speaks when spoken to.

And Springer and Hot Rod, the Transformers you've forgotten about, are currently working out a way to escape the Sacred Ring and head home to Cybertron...you'll see plenty of them SOON!

. . . . . .

Dear Handroid,

I am really going to miss Sir Lorenzo De Felici! The news of his departure left me speechless.

Handroid, you may not know this, but among other things, Sir Lorenzo is a master of the subtle, and not so subtle, facial expression that speaks volumes. And issue 18 said so much.

(Don't be jealous, though, your digits, Handroid, are also filled with expression, they're just much more direct and to the point, less mysterious, but really active & accurate, a "Hands on Deck", feel.)

And soon, Conor Hughes will be navigating our visual experience. And, if the alternate connecting covers of issues 17 and 18 (which, like a loyal Void Rivals reader I went to multiple stores to find) are any indication, it's going to be an experience to remember! And we may be calling him Sir Conor in no time!

Handroid, I know it's a lot to ask, but please shake Sir Lorenzo's hand for me. Or, a High Five, or Fist Bump, if that's more your style. Whatever works best for you…

I know you will miss him, too.

Aaron,
Earth

Thank you for writing in, Aaron, and Handroid is genuinely touched by your concern. Consider Sir Lorenzo fist bumped! While Sir Lorenzo is missed, his dynamic work still graces our main covers and I suspect you'll be knighting Conor after you've read this issue. He's absolutely CRUSHING the work on this series and he's a worthy heir to the VOID RIVALS mantle.

I promise no one is more upset over Lorenzo's departurwe than I am! Creating this world with him has been an absolute blast! I'm very much looking forward to doing it all over again the next time we collaborate on something.

That said, I am really loving working with Conor. He's bringing so much to the book and I'm always excited to be working with new artists! Good times!

. . . . . .

And that's a wrap for TALK TO THE HANDROID this month! PLEASE keep the letters rolling in, folks, we've got space for your elegant words! As an added treat, on the following pages we have a preview for a mind-blowing new Skybound Original series debuting 7/16 called GHOST PEPPER by the great Ludo Lullabi! He's an amazing talent with a powerhouse story to tell...and he's no stranger to the Energon Universe as he did some terrific VOID RIVALS covers last year and drew the sold-out TRANSFORMERS #19--I hope you dig it!

-Ben

Ludo is the best! You should all do yourselves a favor and go out and pre-order the debut issue of GHOST PEPPER at your local comic shop RIGHT NOW! You'll be glad you did! Okay, see you all here next month for more awesome stuff!

-Robert

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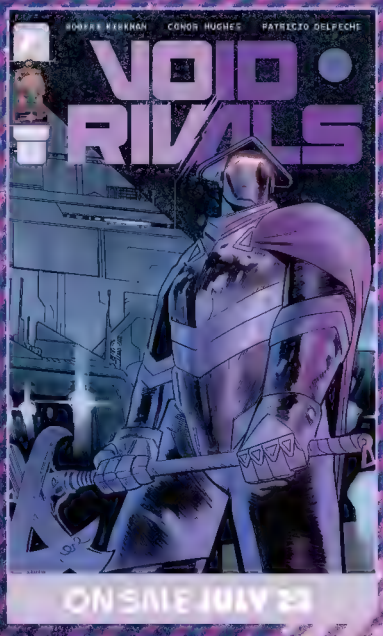
ON SALE **JULY 16**



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ENERGON EXPERIENCE

VIEW FROM THE CHEAPSEATS

VOID RIVALS has been called a "stealth TRANSFORMERS" title in the press and I guess there's some truth to that. The revelations around Zerta Trion and the Sacred Ring, the introductions of Jetfire, Shockwave, Wreck-Gar and now THREE Autobots in the cast all would indicate a fairly strong Cybertronian presence! Outside of robots in disguise, though, VOID RIVALS also highlights the *Transformers* season 3 characters like Skuxxoid, Lord Gyconi, Bosch, and Slizardo...making it a multi-layered reading experience! This series truly is MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE!

Ben!

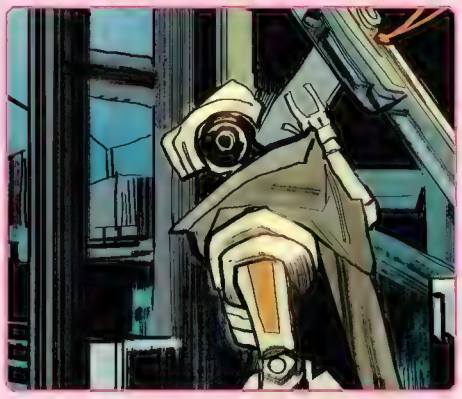
-BEN ABERNATHY, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

CHARACTER SPOTLIGHT

WHO: Hot Rod

WHERE: Hot Rod is currently on Agorria after searching the galaxy for his old friend and Autobot ally, Springer.

WHAT: Can Hot Rod and Springer escape the gravitational pull of the Sacred Ring's black hole to rejoin Elita-1 on Cybertron and help power the Autobots to victory?



WHO'S THAT BOT?

There was a lot of chatter after the shocking ending of VOID RIVALS #19 and the Skuxxoid-napping! A quick pop quiz--can anyone tell me the first appearance of the robot hunter that captured both Skuxxoids? If you guessed the 2024 ENERGON UNIVERSE FREE COMIC BOOK DAY SPECIAL, then you were correct! That's right, we first seeded that character over a year ago!

CREATOR Q&A

Q: Robert Kirkman, who would be your best friend and worst enemy in VOID RIVALS?

A: Man, I want to say Skuxxoid, but he'd probably rob me and leave me for dead. Maybe Handroid as best friend? Enemy? Hmmm...I'm going to pull a deep cut and say Lord Gyconi. That guy is the worst. You'll see.

THE ENERGON UNIVERSE CHECKLIST

- ☐ TRANSFORMERS #21 AVAILABLE NOW
- ☐ G.I. JOE VOL. 1 TP AVAILABLE NOW
- ☐ CODENAME G.I. JOE DELUXE BOOK ONE AVAILABLE NOW
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from LUDO LULLABI and ADRIANO LUCAS

AVAILABLE JULY 2025

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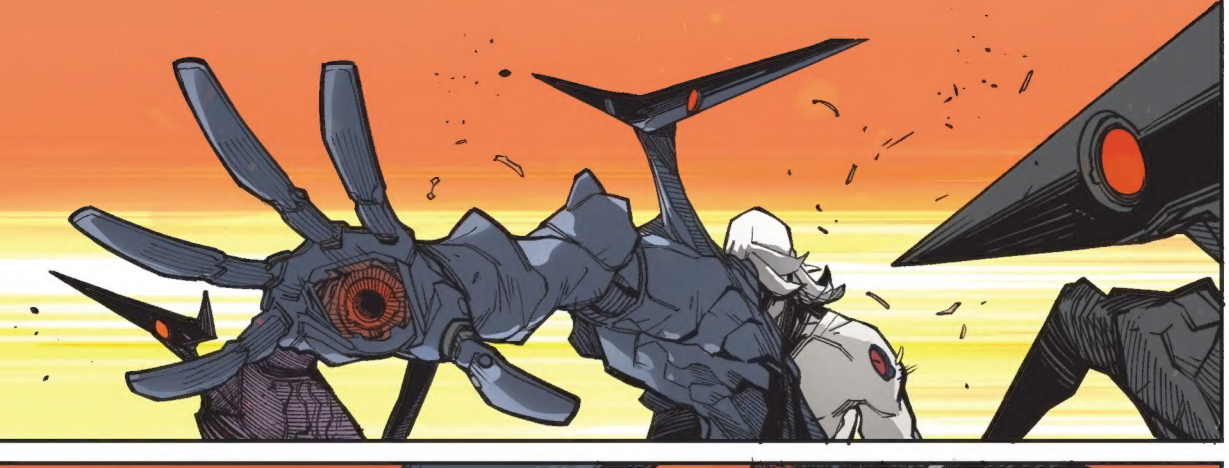
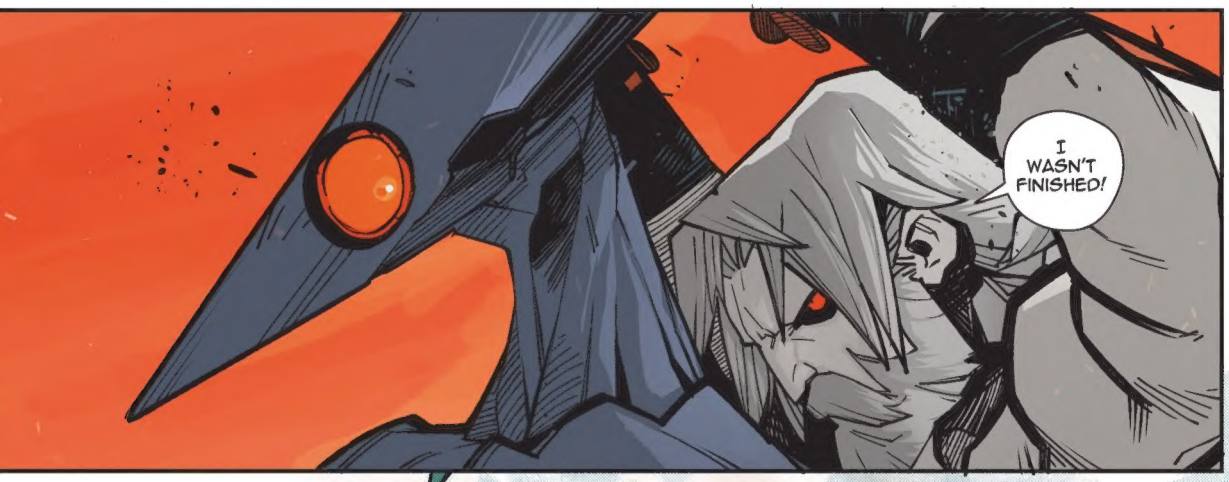
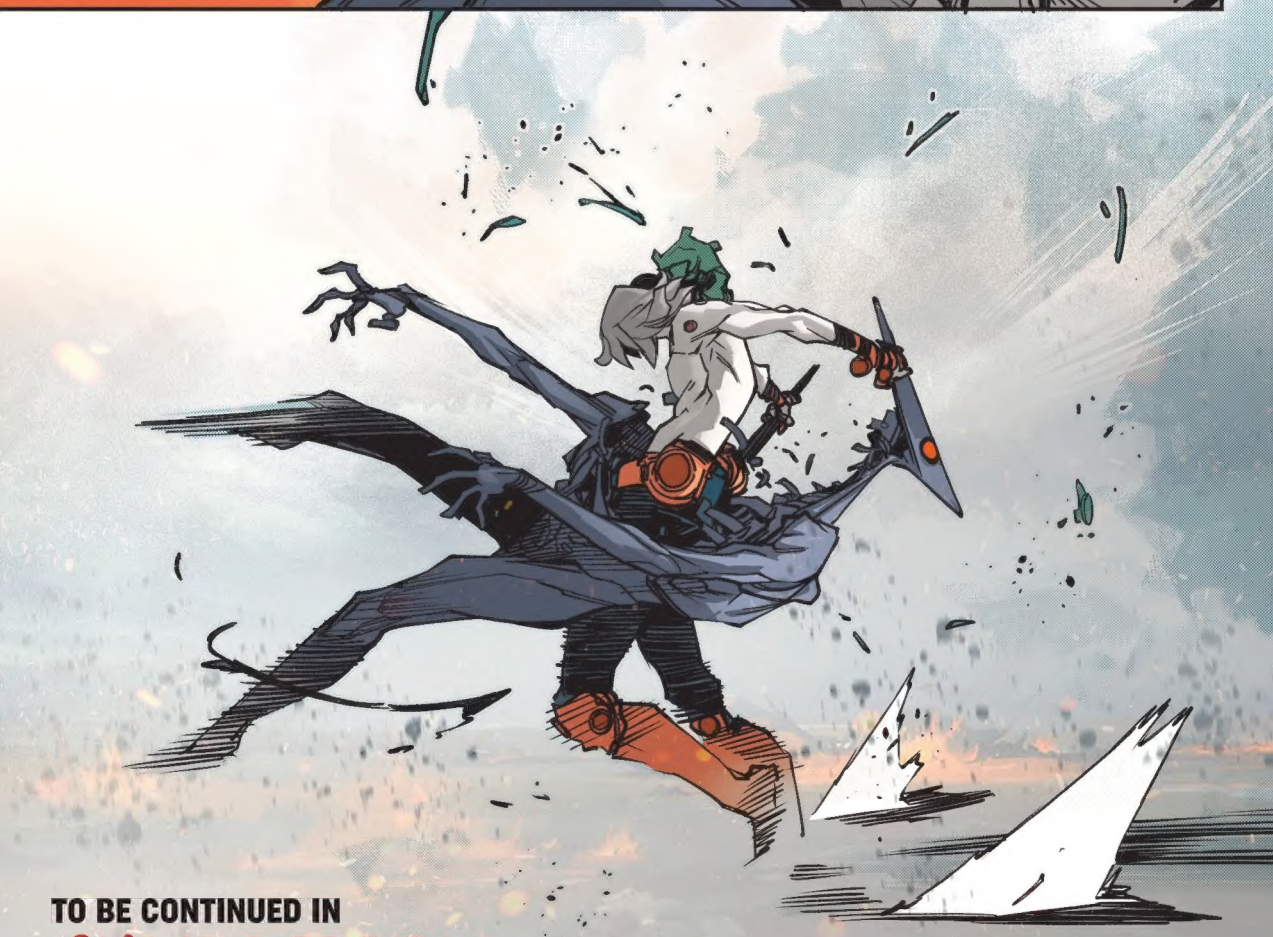
KA-BOOM
OOF!
SERIOUSLY, CAN'T YOU SEE HE'S IN THE MIDDLE OF A MEAL?!
IT'S DISRESPECTFUL TO DISTURB PEOPLE LIKE THIS!
I WOULDN'T PUSH MY LUCK IF I WERE YOU.

WHAT THE HELL HIT MY TRUCK?!
WHO IS THIS GUY!
FINAL WARNING...
IT'S DELICIOUS, ISN'T IT! YOU SHOULD HURRY UP AND FINISH!
IDENTIFY YOURSELF, OR WE WILL PROCEED WITH YOUR ELIMINATION!
WE SHOULD GET OUT OF HERE!
DON'T STAY HERE!
SOMETHING'S ABOUT TO GO DOWN!

YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!
ZAAAAA!!!
BROOM!!!
KANG
OH MY GOD!
THAT GUY WAS COMPLETELY...
DISINTEGRATED...
?!







TO BE CONTINUED IN
GHOST PEPPER #1

COLLECT ALL THESE EXCITING ENERGON UNIVERSE COVERS

COVER A

LORENZO DE FELICI

COVER B

CONOR HUGHES

COVER C

MARTÍN MORAZZO & PATRICIO DELPECHE

COVER D

MARK TORRES

COVER E

PATRICIA MARTÍN

COVER F

JASON HOWARD & ANNALISA LEONI

COVER G

JASON HOWARD

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